



## **Water Protection**

### **Fact Sheet**

Water/Wastewater is one of the 10 Critical Infrastructures in the National Response Framework. While all DHH-OPH personnel participate in response activities, four (4) people are responsible for manning the ESF 12 desk for water and wastewater utilities at GOHSEP during emergencies. Engineering Services personnel in Regions I and III are also responsible for 24-hour monitoring of the Water Works Warning Network, a calling tree for alerting water systems that a spill is in the Lower Mississippi River that has been in operation since 1960. Clearly other goals for Water Protection are: HP&EP, Public Safety and Natural Resources.

### **Objective**

To respond quickly to emergency events at water and wastewater systems, assessing danger or damage and quickly notifying the public, the Governor's Office and the EPA of need to not use the utility or to boil water. The Program staff request/direct resources as needed in an emergency situation for all hazards, including natural disasters. The Outcome Goal is to keep the public informed so no person is injured by use of an impacted utility.

### **Performance Indicators**

- % of successful emergency communications

### **Narrative**

The purpose of the Water Protection program is to inform and direct the public when a utility is impacted during an emergency event and to work towards restoration of the utility as quickly as possible. Program personnel assess the status of water and wastewater systems after an emergency event and report (issue notices) on status to the public, to the Governor and to EPA. Water protection personnel at the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) direct resources to utilities or direct generators, bottled water and bulk water to areas in need. Staff assess any damage to systems and direct resources, prepare

reports and direct/recommend resource allocation as required. All Engineering Services staff are on 24-hour/7day availability to respond to emergency events. Every system in an affected area is contacted by phone or site visit after an emergency to assess status. Staff provide resources and technical assistance for repairs and restoration and DHH performs testing and approval of results for drinking water prior to allowing return to service. Staff also notify surface water systems of approaching spill events and work with other agencies to protect water intakes and wells from contamination.

Staff also provide pre-emergency information to new media for posting or reading on public communications networks. Staff train water and wastewater systems in planning skills to keep infrastructure safe from tampering, and hardening the system from other all hazards, including natural disasters. Every water system has conducted a vulnerability assessment in accordance with Federal law, and has an emergency response plan (these are checked during routine inspections by DHH personnel, who issue violation notices to systems without emergency measures in place.

#### Better Health

- Every person bathes in, drinks, cooks, or washes with water. They must have access to safe water and be able to generate wastewater safely during an emergency event. Planning and preparedness are needed if water is to be kept safe during and after emergencies. Every person generates wastewater at home, school and at work. The population served is >5.4 Million people/year. There would be little economic development or tourism in Louisiana if major systems continued to be impacted after an emergency. Protection of water and wastewater utilities is imperative for public safety and for public confidence that its health is being protected by the State.
- Water Protection Staff collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including: the Federal EPA and CDC, GOHSEP, the DEQ (support agency in the Louisiana Emergency Response Plan) the Louisiana Rural Water Association (volunteer agency with a contract to support response activities) , the Louisiana Water Alert Network (LAWARN) – also a volunteer response group, the Coast Guard, the State Police, the Louisiana Municipal Association, the Police Jury Association, DNR (ground water wells), DOTD (well drilling and construction) , WL&F (invasive species), DOA (agricultural chemical contamination), the Public Service Commission (privately-owned water systems), and the Fire Marshall's office. National collaborations include the National Association of Drinking Water Companies, the Environmental Council of States, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, the Water Environment Federation and the American Water Works Association.
- Engineering Services staff respond to every emergency event 24/7, and work hands-on with GOHSEP, operators, owners, municipal and parish officials, engineers and

developers to ensure that water systems receive resources to assist in rapid restoration to safe operation.

- The value is that people will have the knowledge to not be exposed to contaminated water or wastewater during an emergency event and will not die or are hospitalized from poor quality drinking water or exposure to sewage. That replacement drinking water is provided and resources are directed to damaged systems. Water Protection staff train themselves, stakeholders and utilities to be vigilant during emergencies and on mechanisms to protect systems from potential attacks on water systems or the supply of safe water. Water Protection staff have already saved the state unnecessary costs by troubleshooting requests for assistance, where information relayed to GOHSEP has been inaccurate.
- Grant: Water Protection Coordination for Counter Terrorism Activities No. WP-97616701-6
- This program is delegated to Louisiana DHH Engineering Services by EPA under Federal Authority: 42 U.S.C. 300f, *et seq.* (Safe Drinking Water Act); Regulations 40 CFR Parts 141-143. Grants: Public Water System Supervision Grant (F-00620209 CDCA 66.432)
- State Authority: L.R.S. 40:4.A(7),(8)&(11); 40:4.B; 40:4.11, 40:4.12; 40:5(5),(6)&(20); 40:5.6-9; 40:6; 40:8; 40:31.33
- State Regulation: LAC 51: Part I Gen Provisions and Part XII Water Supplies.
- Links to programs are:
  - [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater), Center for Environmental Health : \
  - <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=242>, DHH-OPH Engineering Services:
  - <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=204>, Safe Drinking Water:
  - <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?id=238>.